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ABSTRACT

This paper explores why and how cases might be used by teacher educators in the professional education of teachers; directs teachers to case materials and relevant articles on case use; suggests guidelines for evaluating cases; and provides a starter set of cases (involving special needs students) that can be photocopied for use in general and special education courses. Eight questions are addressed: (1) Why should teacher educators consider using case method? (2) How are cases different from examples, anecdotes, and reminiscences that teacher educators have found useful? (3) Are there meaningful differences among terms currently in use, e.g., case, case profile, case study, case story, vignette? (4) What characterizes a good case? (5) In what ways do cases differ, and how can teacher educators use those differences to the greatest advantage? (6) How are cases actually used in the classroom and how does one teach with cases? (7) Where can good cases be found? and (8) How can one get started? A reference list uses boldface type to denote entries containing teaching cases. Three appendices include: guidelines for evaluating cases, problem selection and development, and case presentation; sources for teaching cases; and five cases featuring problems encountered by teachers working with special educational needs students. (LL)

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AN INTRODUCTION TO CASE USE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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AN INTRODUCTION TO CASE USE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Leigh Scott felt the flush slowly leave her face as she watched Aaron Washington go out of her classroom, slamming the door behind him. It was the end of the second grading cycle -- students had received their report cards yesterday. Leigh had just taken off her coat, and was on her way to the teachers' room to get a cup of coffee before the bell rang when Aaron came into the room.

He began, "We got to talk about my American government grade." It was clear that he was angry.

Leigh moved to her desk and responded, "Hi, Aaron. What's up? You're upset about your grade?"

"You gave me a D."

"You did D work."

"So did Dale and he got a C." Aaron was leaning over the desk toward Leigh.

"Aaron, this is not a good time to talk about this. The bell is going to ring in a few minutes. Why don't you see me after school this afternoon?"

Aaron shook his head at her suggestion. "I have practice after school. We have to talk now."

Now it was Leigh's turn to shake her head. "This is not a good time -- I have to get ready for homeroom. Besides, there's not really anything to talk about."

Aaron straightened up, took a couple of steps back from the desk, and said, "You gave a white kid who got the grades I did a C and you gave me a D. I even did more homework than Dale. I say we have something to talk about."

(From Case Studies for Teacher Problem Solving, by Rita Silverman, William M. Welty and Sally Lyon. Published by McGraw Hill, 1992; used with permission.)

As the case unfolds, we learn that Leigh, an experienced teacher who has never before been accused of racial bias, actually did give Dale a higher grade than Aaron despite their almost identical marks. We also learn that Dale is a learning disabled student who has been mainstreamed into Leigh's class, and whose class behavior differs sharply from Aaron's. Dale appears attentive, tries to take notes, and always brings his text and notebook to class, while Aaron seldom brings materials to class, and often talks while Leigh is lecturing. Leigh believes that Dale has shown some improvement this marking period, and that it's legitimate to reward

mainstreamed students for effort and improvement. However, there is no mention of effort or improvement in the grading criteria Leigh has established for this average-level American government class. As preservice and inservice teachers discuss this case in education courses and staff development workshops, they uncover multiple layers to the problem, explore a richness of interrelated themes, and begin to shape a position on what Leigh should do to resolve this situation and prevent its recurrence. While they are very likely to disagree on the best plan of action, they are certain to agree that, in one respect at least, Aaron is absolutely right - there is a great deal to talk about here.

White and McNergney (1991) have documented a modest but growing interest in case use in teacher education. An often maligned teaching method (see Teich, 1986) that many teachers know only from the film Paper Chase, case method has been recommended to teacher educators by scholars (e.g., L. Shulman, 1986, and K. Merseth, 1990a) who have observed its usefulness in other professions and recognized its potential for use in the professional education of teachers. Currently, the literature on case use in teacher education is sparse at best: "two stories on case method teaching in Education Week last year, a small stack of journal articles, papers from a Virginia conference on case methods" (White and McNergney, 1991, p. 3) and a few general-methods casebooks available for use in preservice and inservice teacher education. The purpose of this paper is

-to help teacher educators explore why and how cases might be used in the professional education of teachers,

-to direct teachers to case materials and to relevant articles on case

use in teacher education

-to suggest guidelines for evaluating cases

-to provide a starter set of cases (involving special needs students) that can be photocopied for use in general and special education courses.

1. **Why should teacher educators consider using case method?**

The call to incorporate case method in the professional education of teachers has come from within and outside teacher education. One prominent recommendation came from the Carnegie Commission (1986), in A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century. This document, which received national attention and outlined a variety of approaches to reforming teacher education, noted that case use was "well developed in law and business, but almost unknown in teaching instruction" (Carnegie Commission, 1986, p. 76). Examining the profesional education of business managers may be particularly appropriate. Berliner (1983) points out that there are striking similarities between the tasks facing business managers and classroom teachers; among other things, members of both professions must apply abstract knowledge to problems that may not be clearly defined, in settings or situations they may not have encountered before. Case use in business schools is designed to help students develop problem solving skills as they master content knowledge. Kay Merseth, in The Case for Cases in Teacher Education (1990a), notes that because case use is so very new to education, we can't be sure that it will be as effective in fostering professional development for teachers as it has been for business managers. However, Merseth suggests that it is reasonable to expect the following benefits from case use:

* "Cases help students to develop skills of critical analysis and

problem solving. ...to observe closely, make inferences, identify relationships, and formulate organizing principles.

* "Case-based instruction encourages reflective practice and deliberate action. ... The case method, by allowing students to deliberate and choose among competing interpretations, is a step in the direction of Schon's vision of reflection-in-action and affords a path for a more professional orientation in teacher education.

* "Cases help students gain familiarity with analysis and action in complex situations that may not represent a perfect match between theory and practice. ... Good cases and skillful instruction work as an antidote to oversimplification, moving students toward greater sensitivity to context and uniqueness. (Also, they) expose students to settings and contexts that would otherwise be unavailable.

* "Case-based instruction involves students in their own learning. ...Students find case-based instruction lively and engaging (as) they bring to bear prior knowledge and experience, as well as more personal feelings, dispositions, and values.

* "The case method promotes the creation of a community of learners. ... The case method stresses dependence on shared problem solving, wherein individuals take responsibility for their own learning and also contribute significantly to the learning of others.

(Merseth, 1991a, pp. 16 - 19)

On a very pragmatic level, it seems likely that teacher educators are exploring case use because it fosters student participation of the highest quality, and that makes teaching a pleasure. Case-based classes are typically lively, substantive classes, wherein students disagree with each other not only about the best approaches to a given problem, but about what the underlying problem really is. Case method teachers have the satisfaction of seeing their students learn in a much more immediate way than is generally possible -- they watch as students struggle to examine their assumptions, articulate their beliefs, and devise a course of action that is grounded in theory and dependent on abstract knowledge, but tailored to the specific (and sometimes conflicting) demands of the situation presented in the case. Perhaps most rewarding, case method teachers can see that over a semester, students shift from looking to the

teacher for "the best solution" to case problems, and begin to expect that, through collaboration with their peers, they will generate several good options for dealing with the problem, and in the process will come to a deeper understanding of the complex and interrelated issues presented in the case.

Becoming skilled in case use is a challenging, time-consuming, and sometimes humbling task. Teacher educators who have begun to make the necessary efforts undoubtedly are motivated in part by the fact that case-based classes are exciting places to teach and to learn. In Silverman, Welty, and Lyon's (1991) words, "case method teaching can energize teacher education programs" (p. 1).

2. How are cases different from the examples, anecdotes, and even reminiscences that teacher educators have long found useful in their courses?

There are many differences, some minor, others substantive. Some are differences of degree rather than of kind: a richness of detail that is unlikely to be duplicated in even a well-told tale; a complex integration of multiple themes that might be counterproductive in the brief anecdote intended to illustrate a point.

The substantive differences arise because teacher educators use cases for very different purposes than they might use anecdotes or examples. Most often, we cite examples from practice to illustrate a point: we define hyperactivity and attention deficits, then describe third-grade Tommy with equal parts of exasperation and fondness. While cases, like well-chosen examples, provide concrete illustrations of abstract concepts, that is not their primary pupose. A central purpose of case use is to initiate a

discussion that will help students to develop skills in analyzing problems from multiple perspectives and generating solutions that link theory with practice.

It is possible to achieve these ends with cases at least partly because cases are typically much longer than textbook feature boxes or lecturers' reminiscences. Because of this, they can seem much more realistic to students: there are more telling details and a greater likelihood that the multiple issues that characterize real problems will be explored, and therefore greater opportunity for students to identify several (possibly conflicting) ways of framing the problem(s) presented in the case, and to generate a variety of approaches to solving those problems.

Another key difference between cases and the more familiar classroom anecdote or illustration is the fact that students are asked to read the case and prepare for the case discussion (sometimes through a written assignment) before the class. This provides the students with greater opportunity for reflection and encourages them to generate their own interpretations of the case instead of relying on the instructor.

3. Are there meaningful differences among the terms currently in use: case, case profile, case study, case story, vignette?

The term "case study" has long been used to denote a form of qualitative research that results in an intensive and holistic description and analysis of an event or social unit. Case studies depend on multiple data sources (interviews, observations, examinations of records and documents) and are characterized by "thick description" (Merriam, 1985). Yin (1989) identifies as a good example of a case study the popular book about the Watergate scandal, All the President's Men. Such case studies

are much more detailed, and often more analytical, than is typically necessary or desirable for teacher education purposes.

However, some teacher educators (e.g., Kowalski, 1990; Silverman et al, 1992) are using the term case study to denote less comprehensive descriptions of problem situations in teaching. These descriptions vary in the amount of detail and number of problem themes presented, but they are generally much shorter, ranging in length from one to ten pages, and emphasize description (of characters, settings, and events) rather than analysis or interpretation. Various authors use different terms to describe the cases they have written specifically for use in teacher preparation programs: Shulman and Colbert call their cases "vignettes;" Steiner and Peifer call theirs "case profiles;" and Hansen (1987) uses the term "teaching cases," perhaps to make a distinction between these and cases used in business management education. In recent writings (e.g., Merseth, 1990a, 1991b) and workshops (e.g., The Commonwealth Center Working Conference on Case Methods in Teacher Education, June, 1991), the simple term "case" is used most frequently. To support this practice, case is the term that will be used throughout this paper to describe relatively brief descriptions of problem situations in teaching that are designed to promote teacher reflection and problem solving.

4. What characterizes a good case?

McCorcle (1984) says good cases have "a significant problem, lucid detail, a minimum of jargon, a focus on context and process, and a clear narrative style." Shulman and Colbert (1988) value cases that include a very detailed description of the context: the community, the school, the classroom and the students; but Broudy (1985) says good cases cannot be

"regionally or theoretically idiosyncratic." While Shulman and Colbert (1988) offer some cases that are basically descriptions of relationships, Silverman, Welty, and Lyon (1992) maintain that a good case presents a dilemma or crisis, particularly one in which it is the teacher who has the primary responsibility for improving the situation. Noting that "there is not yet a consensus among educators as to what constitutes a 'good case,' Merseth (1991b) says that "it is clear that cases should be sufficiently complex to stimulate debate and to allow issues not apparent upon first review to emerge after further consideration" (p. 7).

(Note: While preparing to write their own cases, a graduate class in educational psychology examined dozens of cases and generated a list of the qualities they valued most, which is included as Appendix A.)

Given the tremendous diversity within teacher education, it seems likely that no single definition of a good case will emerge, and that's probably beneficial. Teacher educators will select cases not because they conform to any particular standard, but because they are likely to promote development of the knowledge and skills that are important for a given curriculum and group of students. Therefore, it may be helpful to consider some ways that different kinds of cases might be useful for different purposes.

5. In what ways do cases differ, and how can teacher educators use those differences to the greatest advantage?

Each case writer or editor seems to select a single format for cases or casebooks and to use it consistently, but there's lively disagreement about which format is best. Listed below are some of the more obvious differences in format, along with a few examples of how a particular format

may be more useful for certain settings or purposes, and less useful for others.

a. Cases may be written in the first person (e.g., Steiner and Peifer, 1990; Shulman and Colbert, 1988) or in the third person (Kowalski, Weaver, and Henson, 1990; Silverman, Welty, and Lyons, 1992); from the perspective of a teacher, a student, a student teacher, an intern or mentor teacher, a parent, an administrator, or from the omniscient point of view. Which might be most useful for helping sensitize prospective teachers to the needs of the at-risk student? for conveying the complex, multifaceted nature of classroom life?

b. Most cases are narratives; some are videotapes and some are collections of protocol materials. Is one format more likely than another to promote problem identification? an appreciation of the multiple perspectives on a problem? an awareness that there is more than one issue underlying most classroom problems?

c. Some cases are highly context-specific (e.g., Shulman and Colbert, 1988) while others emphasize generalizability (e.g., Greenwood, Good, and Siegel, 1971). In using a "general" case do we risk ignoring the best of research on teaching and suggesting that effective teaching is anything but context-sensitive? On the other hand, can we select context-specific cases that will be useful to prospective teachers without knowing the educational settings they are likely to face?

d. Most cases include some sort of problem or crisis; some end at the crisis (e.g., Silverman, Welty and Lyon, 1992; Kowalski, Weaver, and Henson, 1990), while others present the complete story, describing the courses of action taken to resolve the crisis and the consequences of those actions (e.g., Shulman and Colbert, 1988). Is one better than the other for giving students a chance to try out solutions to potentially volatile situations? for developing analytical skills? (Note: some case writers [e.g., Christensen, 1987] present "B" and even "C" cases - descriptions of events which unfolded after the initial crisis point with which the "A" case ended. Typically, "B" cases are included in the instructor's manual only, not in the student's copy of the casebook, and are duplicated and distributed by the instructor at the appropriate stage in the case discussion.)

e. Some casebooks present cases only (e.g., Silverman, Welty, and Lyons, 1992); others include discussion questions or references that may guide readers in problem solving (e.g., Steiner and Peifer, 1990); still others present cases with "layers of commentary" from novices, experienced teachers, and education scholars (e.g., Shulman and Colbert, 1988). Might one be more useful than the others for promoting critical thinking skills? for broadening content coverage?

f. Some cases are only a page long (e.g., Steiner and Peifer, 1988); most are four to ten pages, and some are over thirty pages long (e.g., Kleinfeld, 1990). Is one format better than another for preservice

undergraduates? for experienced teachers on the graduate level? Is a one-page case likely to provide a model and impetus for teacher reflection? Does a fifty-page case (which is likely to take up several class sessions, if not an entire semester) unduly limit students' vicarious experience of other educational settings?

6. **How are cases actually used in the classroom? How does one teach with cases?**

Just as there are multiple purposes for case use and a variety of formats for cases, there are many approaches to using cases in the classroom. Some instructors use cases exclusively, others combine case use with traditional lecture and discussion sessions. Some instructors have a directive style, and assume a very active role in the case discussion, asking many questions, challenging unexamined assumptions, intentionally calling on students to elicit disagreement, and so on; others prefer to exercise less control over the nature and direction of the discussion, allowing the class more autonomy in the case analysis. Regardless of the instructor's style, there are three fairly standard tasks in a case discussion: to elicit the facts of the case, to identify the issues underlying the presenting crisis and analyze the problem from multiple perspectives, and to recommend solutions.

Hansen (1985) notes that case method teaching "is less specialized and technical than many people assume" (p. 56). The instructor's manuals of most casebooks offer help with one of the most challenging tasks for novice case method teachers: framing key questions to insure that the major blocks of discussion will be covered. The instructor's manual accompanying the Silverman, Welty and Lyon casebook (1991) provides a very brief but thorough and systematic introduction for novices, in a chapter appropriately titled "Case Method Teaching: How to Do It." On a much larger scale, Teaching and the Case Method (Christensen and Hansen, 1987)

describes the evolution of case method teaching at the Harvard University School of Business, and includes historical perspectives, reflections on teaching and great teachers, and cases in which the central characters are college instructors using the case method. These readily available resources, supplemented perhaps with a visit to a case-based class, can provide a good picture of the case method.

However, Hansen's disclaimer notwithstanding, teaching well with cases requires skills and strategies that are not necessarily part of good lecture/discussion teaching. Teachers hoping to refine their case method pedagogy have several options. The Educational Development Center offers a faculty training package consisting of a comprehensive manual with sample cases and teaching notes, and a 60 minute videotape showing teachers using case method with their classes. Summer institutes in case-based teaching and case writing have been offered for the last two years by The Commonwealth Center for the Education of Teachers, at the University of Virginia and James Madison University, and are likely to be offered again. With the planned expansion of the Center for Case Studies in Education at Pace University, there will undoubtedly be increased opportunities for teacher educators to become skilled in case method and to gain easier access to cases.

7. **Where can I find good cases?**

Merseth (1990a) notes that good teaching cases are hard to find because education lacks a central source, such as a clearinghouse or periodical, for the collection and dissemination of cases. Appendix B lists cases and casebooks that are available commercially. Kleinfeld (1990b) offers suggestions for creating cases from popular films, teacher narratives, and

students' experiences during fieldwork assignments and student teaching. For those who are interested in writing their own cases, Hansen (1987) provides a well-marked map through the tasks of gathering the data and actually writing the case.

8. **How can I get started?**

-Read "Case Method Teaching: How to Do It" in Silverman, Welty, and Lyon (1991).

-Observe a colleague teaching with cases. In choosing a class to visit, keep in mind that in form and in purposes, the cases and methods used in business are closer to education than law cases and methods are.

-Give it a try. Included in Appendix C are sample cases, developed by students in a graduate class in educational psychology, that can be modified and/or reproduced for class use.

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Boldface denotes entries which contain teaching cases.

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Appendix A

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING TEACHING CASES

Listed below are elements that were identified by a graduate educational psychology class as important characteristics of particularly good teaching cases. Just as good lessons need not contain all of the parts of any particular lesson design model, so good cases need not contain all of the elements described here.

PROBLEM SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. The situation described is a realistic one; readers could imagine that they might be in a similar situation one day.

2. There is an element of generalizability: a person who has read, reflected on, and possibly researched responses to the case study would, as a result of that effort, have knowledge and skills that might transfer to their own teaching.

3. There is more than one major theme in the case. Multiple themes increase the complexity, and therefore the reality of most cases because few real problems are simple and self-contained. The elements must be interwoven, however, so that the case still has a focus.

4. There is not a "single right answer." Just as the problem being described may have multiple sources, there may be a variety of appropriate ways to respond.

5. The problem presented in the case is one that can be, if not solved, at least substantially addressed by the major character(s) in the case, usually teachers. Cases that can lead to solutions such as "refer to special ed" aren't likely to promote the development of teachers' critical thinking or creative problem solving skills.

CASE PRESENTATION

6. The writing is lively, colorful, and catches the reader's attention. It reads, to some extent, like a good story.

7. The vocabulary is appropriate to graduate and upper-level undergraduate classes in education. While the language should not be artificially inflated, the author can presume some sophistication on the part of the reader.

8. Details about the background of the situation are provided, as is the case with all clear writing that paints a vivid picture, but they are provided at appropriate points -- not, for example, all at the beginning, before a reader has a chance to become engaged in the narrative.

9. There is a strong opening to set the stage and engage the reader's interest.

10. There is a central incident to the case study. The incident may come at any point in the narrative, but it is clearly identifiable.

11. There is a distinction, and perhaps a physical gap, between the description of the incident and the description of what (if anything) the teacher did in response. This allows the reader time to consider what he or she might have done in that situation. Alternately, it may be best to leave the incident unresolved - to force the reader to identify possible reactions and choose the best among them.

12. It is clear that some sort of decision (immediate, delayed, or both) is required of the central character in the case. It may be useful to help the reader to consider actions that might be taken before a decision is make, e.g., discussion questions following the case might ask if there is someone the teacher should consult before taking action, if there are local or state regulations governing teacher actions in such cases, if professionals in other fields (occupational therapy, counseling, medicine) may have expertise to lend, etc.

13. The case study is well organized. There is a logical flow to the narrative; details support the story but do not interrupt it.

14. The characters in the case study are not stereotypes. The central characters are not heroes or martyrs, nor stupid and inept, but people facing problems and difficult decisions. The "bad guys" are sympathetically drawn and have plausible reasons for their actions. Racial and gender stereotyping is avoided.

Appendix B

Sources for Teaching Cases

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Appendix C

The following cases, which feature problems encountered by teachers working with students with special educational needs, were written by graduate students in an introductory level course in educational psychology. Permission to modify and/or reproduce the cases is has been granted by the authors.

CHANGE AND RESISTANCE

by
Karin Otto
Marist College

Shouting at the new teacher, "You white ass bitch...I hate you.....Why you be changin everything?", LaMarque slammed the door and headed towards the vice-principal's office.

The new teacher, Miss Stangel, stood in front of the class feeling paralyzed and frustrated. How could she explain the purpose of the changes that have taken place since she began three days ago? How could she be sure that the changes will be effective in bringing about a positive and nurturing environment that is conducive to learning?

The self-contained special education class includes six children, ages eight to ten, from low socio-economic backgrounds. Their disabilities include moderate to severe behavior problems, language impairments, and learning disabilities. The children are either African-American or Hispanic. The previous teacher, Ms. Smith, worked with the students from September through March. She left to have a baby in March and is not scheduled to return until September. Miss Stangel, who had graduated in January with certification in elementary and special education, was hired to teach the class for the remainder of the school year.
After observing Ms. Smith for three days before assuming responsibility for the class, Miss Stangel learned the routine. On a typical day, the children entered the classroom and moved their desks around to find a new place to sit. They argued and teased each other. On the board three sentences about the weather were written for the class to copy. Some of the students quickly and sloppily copied the sentences; others complained that it was too much and asked if they could copy only one sentence. The teacher permitted the children to copy only one if they wished. During this morning slot, the children had one hour free time. Free-time consisted of snack, playing cards, throwing a ball around, and other free choice activities. Often during this time a fight broke out and one or two students were sent to the vice-principal's office. Ms. Smith felt that free time was a valuable opportunity for the students to develop social skills. After free-time students were instructed to work on their phonics books and basal reader workbooks. Most children could not read the words on the pages and could not complete an assignment on their own. Either the teacher or aide asked the questions and the students responded orally. Some children preferred to work alone and filled in any answer. After reading, the children had

recess and lunch. When they returned from lunch they usually worked on math. Although the students' math abilities varied greatly, Ms. Smith taught the class as a group and assigned all students the same worksheets. Ms. Smith told Miss Stangel that her overriding goals were to develop social skills, through both academic and play activities.

After a few days on her own, and some consultation with the teacher's aide, Miss Stangel began implementing changes that she thought would create an environment more conducive to learning. Desks remained in one spot. Each child had his/her own work contract which clearly stated the assignments for that day. Whole Language lessons were incorporated which covered the areas of science and social studies. Students read aloud daily, using beginning reader books which were at their reading level. Miss Stangel read to the students daily, either chapter books or short story books. Morning free-time was decreased to 15 minutes for snack,and afternoon free-time was only permitted if the students finished their contract work. This block of free-time was for the students to work at a variety of centers: math, reading, listening, language, science and social studies. An "award chart", or behavior modification program, was on the front bulletin board and students received stickers if they completed their daily contracts.

The students initial responses were anger and resistance. They complained, "Ms. Smith let us have free-time, why won't you?....Ms. Smith said that I don't have to do it if I don't want to do it...The other teacher didn't make me read!". Miss Stangel explained to the students every day for the first two weeks that they were in school to learn, to gain respect for themselves and for others, to be proud of their work. She struggled to plan lessons that would be motivating for them and that would guarantee each one some success. So far, though, the only real progress she had seen was in the level of resistance they gave her for each new task: nearly-constant muttering and grumbling had replaced the loud protests that used to greet each new assignment. Meager as it was, Miss Stangel regarded this as progress - until this morning, when she told LaMarque that beginning today, she wanted him to add one original sentence each day to the board word he copied into his classwork notebook.

LaMarque responded, "Don't you be pushin on me, now."

Miss Stangel said, "I'm not pushing on you, LaMarque. I'm just asking you to do what I know you're capable of. It's for your own sake, not mine."

"You think you know what's best for everybody," LaMarque replied, his voice rising with anger. "Well, you don't. Everything was going on just fine till you come along. Now it stinks ...."

Miss Stangel interrupted him with, "LaMarque, I will not allow you to talk to me or any other teacher that way." Quietly but firmly, she continued, "I suggest you begin your work right now. If you want to discuss this later, calmly and politely, we can do that. If not, you can take your complaints to the office. What you cannot do is sit here yelling at me and refusing to do your work."

At that, LaMarque swept the notebook and pencils from his desk onto the floor, shouted "You white ass bitch...I hate you.....Why you be changin everything?", and slammed the door behind him as he headed toward the vice-principal's office.

COREY SPEAKS OUT

by

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and
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Located in a large rural area, Elmsville Elementary School had a population of 185 students in grades K through 6. It was one of many small elementary schools to serve the community, and as such, support services (e.g., speech therapists, remedial reading teachers, and school psychologists) rotated among the schools. The parents valued the school's warm family atmosphere and were actively involved in their children's education.

It was fifth period on a Friday in April and everyone in Ms. Baker's 6th grade Social Studies class was excited. For the past two weeks the students had been working diligently on their group projects. Today was the day the students presented their projects to the rest of the class.

The students quickly settled in their seats and the presentations began. Each group had chosen its own reporter, and Mrs. Baker was gratified to see that this task was not always assigned to the most vocal member of the group. The first three went smoothly, and Ms. Baker noted that this lesson was more motivating and successful than she had anticipated. At the end of the final presentation, however, one of the students from that group angrily called out.

"It's not f-f-fair!" Corey yelled. I d-d-didn't get to t-t-talk about our t-t-topic. It seems l-l-like I never get to s-s-say anything in cl-cl-class. You n-n-never call on m-m-me anymore, even when I raise my hand. When I have a qu-qu-question, I d-d-don't get t-t-to ask it."

Stunned by his outburst, Ms. Baker was not sure how to respond.

"I didn't realize you felt this way, Corey. Can we meet after school to talk about this?"

At that moment the bell rang and Ms. Baker said in a quiet voice, "Class dismissed." Corey was the last one to leave, and as he walked out the door he said, "See you at th-th-three."

Corey was a bright student with a severe stuttering problem. He had transferred to Elmsville at the beginning of the school year. Every Tuesday the speech therapist, Ms. Cole, visited Elmsville, and Corey worked with her for 45 minutes. In addition to his regular classes, he was a member of the chorus where his stuttering did not manifest itself.

At the beginning of the year the other students had mostly ignored Corey, but as the weeks went by, they began to tease him about his stuttering. Although Ms. Cole had recommended that Corey be treated just like any other student, Ms. Baker felt uncomfortable calling on Corey in class and often overlooked his raised hand. She had never had a student who stuttered before, and she thought she was helping Corey avoid humiliation and undue pressure.

In addition, Ms. Baker needed to consider the rest of the class in terms of pacing. Because it took Corey a while to respond to questions, the other students often lost interest, and Ms. Baker had a difficult time bringing them back on task. In order to promote achievement, Ms. Baker believed that it was important for students to have many opportunities to respond to questions as well as ask questions of their own. With Corey, however, Ms. Baker faced a dilemma: giving him an opportunity to respond resulted in a disproportionate reduction in the other students' opportunities to respond and participate actively. On the other hand, imposing this limitation on Corey was probably effecting his self-esteem and academic performance.

During a free period, Ms. Baker pulled Corey's permanent records and tried to analyze the contents quickly, focusing on the reports of previous teachers. None mentioned the problem she was having with Corey; if anything, their comments suggested the opposite situation: "Shy", "Uncomfortable in speech situations", "Stutter is exacerbated by stress" , "Easy to get along with", "Quiet, cooperative." She returned to her desk and began to reflect upon the meeting she was to have with Corey. How could she effectively balance Corey's needs with those of the rest of the class?

TOO FEW OPTIONS

by
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Marist College

"I ain't coming back tomorrow!" Jeff called out suddenly. "I hate that jerk Mr. Poling. I was just sitting there and he yelled at me for throwing paper across the room. He called me an idiot and sent me to the office. I'll never pass the class, and I'm not going to graduate without it. What's the use."

The final bell rang and he ran out of the room. Kathy sat at her desk exhausted and disillusioned. How could she possible do everything she wanted to for the students that she worked with in the resource room? She had gotten used to the idea of being mother, counselor, social worker, and sometimes even nurse for these students. These were areas where she could see results in most cases. For example, Kenny would probably come in tomorrow, and she would talk to him and convince him that quitting school would hurt him, not Mr. Poling. On another occasion, when a group of students did not understand the unit on reproduction in their biology class, she had a very open discussion about the facts and myths of their own sexuality. At least these accomplishments made her feel that she was having a positive effect on her special education students.

Unfortunately Kathy often felt ineffective in what she knew was the major responsibility of a resource teacher: helping her students succeed in their mainstream academic classes. Her students were more at risk of failure and dropping out than the rest of the population of the school. Of the twenty students she had as ninth graders four years ago, only five would graduate this year. She was keenly aware that special ed services were so critical at this level, because this was the last chance to reach these teenagers. After high school came real life. If they couldn't be successful in the protected and supportive environment of the school, how could they succeed in life?

To Kathy it seemed that the resource room programs that seemed fine for elementary students just didn't work for high school students. Perhaps it was expected that the elementary teachers could work miracles and remediate everyone's disabilities before they reached high school.

Unfortunately, this didn't happen. Kathy's students were dumped into regular classes at a great disadvantage. They had average intelligence, but they had skill levels and reading levels well below their chronological ages and their grade levels. They were bright, likable kids with lots to offer, and they deserved the chance to earn diplomas and to be successful in life. But, at Peterborough High School anyway, it seemed like the system worked against them.

Kathy watched as the students quickly left the room to go home. There was David who was in ninth grade for the third time because he had only managed to earn one and a half credits. David had a fourth grade reading ability, disabilities in both the auditory and visual modes, and no organizational skills. He excelled in the vocational program. No one in his family had ever graduated from high school, and the family was very poor. His mother was a hard working woman who did the best she could for her three children, given the circumstances. David's father had left the home several years ago, and the family was on welfare. David had very low self esteem and became frustrated very easily. At this point Kathy was not sure if the academic test scores she had for him were valid because he seemed to have given up completely. He stayed in school though, because his mother knew that this was important. What will happen when her determination alone is no longer enough to keep David in school?

Jeff had been the first one out the door, just ahead of David. Jeff had an above-average IQ and "normal" home life, with two parents living in the home and enough money to be comfortable. Seventeen and in the tenth grade, Jeff was bright and could always answer the higher level questions Kathy asked him. He had strong opinions that had obviously been well thought out and that he could articulate clearly and persuasively. His problem was that he couldn't get along with his teachers and his peers, and he seemed to have no direction or purpose for his life. He complained bitterly about a strained relationship with his father and maintained that his father was the reason he had no friends. Counseling was not available because the district did not have a psychologist on staff, and made it a policy not to recommend outside services taxpayers might end up paying for.

As she went over her plans for the next day, Kathy wondered why, after so many years, LD students were still at risk. The apathy and misunderstanding of the regular teachers seemed to be part of the problem. Lack of motivation was a trait common to LD students, and regular teachers were quick to use this as an excuse for the students' lack of success. However, lack of motivation was understandable in most cases. It would be very discouraging to be sixteen or seventeen and still be in the ninth grade. Also, it would be impossible for a student with auditory disabilities to learn from a teacher who used lecture as her only teaching method. The regular teachers weren't totally to blame, though, because it was difficult to individualize to meet the needs of LD students when there were more than thirty students in the class. With an increase in standardized testing to promote higher standards - and accountability - teachers had many pressures, too.

As she gathered her things to go home, Kathy thought with a sense of dread about the I.E.P. conferences that were scheduled for next week. She would have to sit with these parents and try to explain why their children were not succeeding. She would be able to empathize, but not be able to offer answers or solutions.

She knew that what was needed were not just equal, but appropriate educations for these LD students. Modifications of regular education standards and expectations would not be appropriate, but modifications of methods and materials would be. The students needed the opportunity to have the material presented in a way that would address their strengths so that they could be successful. Kathy knew she couldn't do this effectively in the one or two periods a day the students were in her resource room. Yet it would be wrong to assign them to full-time special class placements, where they could not earn credits toward regular high school diplomas. Kathy reasoned that there must be an alternative - a way to change teaching methods within the regular classes so that her students could learn and get the diplomas that were so necessary for success in life. And she knew she had to find this alternative soon because time was running out for Jeff and David.

WHEN MAINSTREAMING HURTS

by

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Allison is an eight year old girl classified as mentally retarded. She is presently enrolled in Mrs. Riley's self-contained 6:1:1 (six students, one teacher, one aide) classroom. Allison has been progressing nicely in Mrs. Riley's class for the past two months. She has demonstrated particular growth in mathematics. Allison is a timid child who has difficulty functioning in large groups. She becomes easily distracted and anxious when surrounded by more than a few other children. She needs extra support and encouragement to interact with her peers.

Allison's mother, Jane Miller, has been very impressed with her daughter's recent achievement in mathematics. She suggested to Mrs. Riley that Allison be mainstreamed into a regular classroom for math. In response to her suggestion, Mrs. Riley said that although Allison has demonstrated significant improvements in mathematics, she has difficulty functioning in large groups and may need more time to strengthen her self-confidence and her social skills. Mrs. Riley thought that Allison would eventually be ready for mainstreaming, but that it was premature to consider it at this stage.

Disappointed with Mrs. Riley's response, Mrs. Miller met with the Director of Special Education and expressed her strong belief that Allison should be mainstreamed for mathematics. She then asked the director to schedule a CSE meeting to discuss the situation.

The meeting was scheduled within the week and Mrs. Miller presented her suggestion to the committee: "I am very pleased with Allison's progress in mathematics. I am also aware that Allison has difficulty socializing; however, I believe that Allison would benefit, both socially and academically from being mainstreamed for mathematics. She would have the perfect opportunity to strengthen her social skills with a greater number of students, while getting the more sophisticated math instruction she needs."

Mrs. Riley responded, "Mrs. Miller, I am as pleased with Allison's progress in math as you are. I am not concerned with Allison's ability to succeed academically; in fact, Mrs. Armstrong's first grade class is covering the same math concepts that Allison has been working on. I have considered Mrs. Armstrong's class as a possibility for Allison to eventually be mainstreamed. At this point, I strongly recommend that Allison remain in my class where we can work on her self-esteem and improve her social skills. I am afraid that mainstreaming Allison at this point would be too overwhelming. Allison has a tendency to cry when she is surrounded by a group of children and it is very difficult for her to function appropriately, let alone do her best, in such an environment. Let's wait before we subject Allison to an environment for which she may not be ready for".

Mrs. Miller forcefully explained, "If Allison were mainstreamed, it would be a parent's dream come true. It would go a long way to reducing the stigma of Allison's having been labeled 'mentally retarded'. P.L. 94-142 requires that a child be educated in the least restrictive environment. Let us at least do Allison justice and give her the opportunity to work in a regular classroom with regular kids! We cannot possibly know that Allison would not be able to function in a regular classroom until we give her a chance."

The decision was finalized at the meeting: Allison would be mainstreamed into Mrs. Armstrong's classroom for mathematics beginning the following Monday. It was also agreed at the meeting that a student from Mrs. Riley's class would walk Allison to and from Mrs. Armstrong's class until Allison felt comfortable walking by herself.

On Monday, Allison arrived at Mrs. Armstrong's class with her classmate Jenny. Mrs. Armstrong warmly welcomed Allison and introduced her to the class. One of the students in the class said, "Hi you can sit next to me; my name is Tracey." Allison held tight to Jenny's hand and didn't take another step. Jenny said, "Come on Allison. You're going to sit here," and began walking Allison to the empty seat next to Tracey. Allison sat down apprehensively and Jenny returned to Mrs Riley's class.

Five days had passed when the following scene took place. It was a scenario that had become common in Mrs. Armstrong's classroom.

Mrs. Armstrong asked, "Tracey, could you please share your crayons with Allison?"

Tracey replied, "I'm not sharing my crayons with her--she never wants to give them back and she puts them in her mouth!"

Peter added, "Yeah, and she always cries like a big baby when you want your stuff back."

Allison, with tears in her eyes, pleaded, "Let me go back to Mrs. Riley's class.....please, let me go!"

A SPANISH CLASS IN CONFLICT

by

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For the third time in ten minutes, Jose Delgado disrupted the Spanish I class by speaking out in Spanish. "Jose, please don't talk while I'm trying to teach", said Ms. Adams. Jose replied "Puta Madre." There was raucous laughter from several spots in the classroom as the native speakers recognized this high shock value obscenity. The laughter was followed by more minor disruptions as the non-Spanish speakers tried to find out what Jose had just said. Fearful of losing control of her class, Ms. Adams said quietly but firmly, "Class, I expect you to come to order now." From the right rear corner of the room came a young girl's voice: "Let Jose teach the class -- he knows more Spanish than you anyway. You are not Hispanic".

It was the first day of school at Wilkinsboro High School and Ms. Adams' first day of teaching in a public school. She had been teaching Spanish for four years. Prior to coming to Wilkinsboro, she taught at a small Catholic high school in the suburbs of Columbus, Ohio where the students were predominately white and middle class. Queen of Angels provided a sharp contrast to Wilkinsboro High School in the Bronx, which served several minority-group communities with linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. A large portion of the student body comes from Spanish-speaking families: Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Cuban.

Ms. Adams felt challenged and excited, but also apprehensive when she learned her Level I Spanish class would be a multi-cultural group of students. While the majority of the students were non-Spanish speakers taking their first foreign language class, there were also a few Chicano and Puerto Rican students who spoke many different Spanish dialects.

The first week of school was frustrating for everyone in the classroom. The non-Spanish speakers felt confused and overlooked because Ms. Adams would not linger too long on any one subject fearing that the native speakers would become bored and would then act out. The non-Spanish

speakers also felt uncomfortable in oral participation because the Hispanics made fun of their simple errors and their pronunciation. The Hispanics obviously didn't need the vocabulary exercises and grammar drills that were appropriate for the rest of the group; they needed to develop the ability to read, write, and function in a Spanish-speaking context beyond their immediate communities.

Should Ms. Adams require different assignments and use different grading standards to measure the native speakers' language proficiency in comparison to the non-native speakers? Would that be fair? Is it likely to ease the discipline problems in her class - or escalate them?